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# Fitness and Exercise



# Exercise and Fitness

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## 9 Ways to Make Fitness Part of Your Life

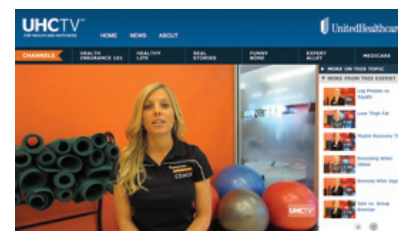
**You don't need big blocks of time to exercise. Squeeze in activity throughout the day and reap the benefits!**

You've probably heard it a million times. Regular exercise can help reduce your risks of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. It may help boost your mood and your energy levels and reduce stress. Exercise, along with sensible nutrition, is important for losing and maintaining weight. And yet, it can be hard to figure out how to get started or fit it in.

Everyone's game plan may be different. Some people may want to take an exercise class three times a week or join an organized sports team. For others, it might be finding ways to sneak in a few minutes of activity throughout the day.

It's OK to start slowly. You should aim to be active for at least 30 minutes most days or a total of 2 1/2 hours per week. But you can break your activity up into 10-minute chunks and still reap health benefits. Just be sure it's moderately-intense aerobic activity. And don't forget muscle-strengthening activities. Aim to do exercises that hit the major muscle groups at least two days a week. Pick activities that you enjoy!

Keep in mind, if you are physically inactive or have a chronic health condition such as arthritis, diabetes, or heart disease check with your doctor before starting an exercise program. He or she can tell you what types and amounts of activities are safe and suitable for you.



## Video Spotlight:

[Why Walking is Good Exercise](#)

[How to Stay Motivated While Exercising](#)

## 9 Ways to Make Fitness Part of Your Life *(continued)*

### Here are some tips for fitting in fitness:

**Add steps to your day.** Park farther away from the entrance or get off the bus one stop earlier. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk around during your kids' sports practices and games.

**Find a workout buddy.** Exercising with a friend can be more fun and a good motivator. Ask a co-worker to go for a walk during lunch or see if a neighbor wants to shoot hoops. It is harder to skip if you know someone is counting on you.

### Keep exercise clothes at work.

You can change into them before heading home or to the gym. And have a comfortable pair of athletic shoes and socks handy so you can walk during your coffee or lunch breaks.



### Schedule your fitness activities.

If you put exercise on your calendar like other appointments, you're more likely to do it.

**Acknowledge your successes.** Keep a log of all the times you make a healthy choice to move more, such as taking the stairs instead of an elevator. Or track the amount and frequency of your activities. Reward yourself with a new pair of sneakers or a cool new water bottle when you meet a goal.

**Try some new moves.** Check out fitness DVDs from your library or choose a video from a reputable online source like the American Council on Exercise. There are many 10-minute workouts out there.

**Move while you watch TV.** Be active during commercials. Try getting up off the couch and marching in place for 60 seconds.

**Play games with your kids.** Don't just watch while your kids play outside — join in their fun. Play tag or just toss a ball back and forth. If your kids love video games, think about swapping their favorite game for an active one in which the user must move his or her body to play. The whole family will break a sweat by dancing, following an exercise routine or virtually competing in sports.

**Clean up.** Both housework and doing work in the yard can count as physical activity, too. Rake and bag your leaves. Scrub your kitchen floor. Push the lawn mower.

After you've built short periods of activity into your day, think about times when you could lengthen each burst by a few minutes. The key is to start small and ramp up gradually. If your fitness level allows, you can also increase the intensity of your activity, even if you don't increase the time.

Even when you're worn out from a busy day, try to make time for fitness. You likely will feel energized afterward. And remind yourself that every bit counts!

### SOURCES:

- United States Department of Health and Human Services. 2008 physical activity guidelines for Americans. Accessed: 02/27/2013
- Weight-control Information Network. Tips to help you get active. Accessed: 02/27/2013
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Physical activity for a healthy weight. Accessed: 02/27/2013
- United States Department of Agriculture ChooseMyPlate.gov. Tips for increasing physical activity. Accessed: 02/27/2013





# Start with 10-Minute Workouts

**Short stints of favorite activities can provide the same benefits as a longer workout session.**

Kay Ross never expected to gain weight. She didn't make any abrupt lifestyle changes as she moved through her 20s, never developed a taste for, say, double-scoop sundaes or enormous slices of cheesecake. But she didn't develop a routine of being physically active, either. Like a lot of people, she simply watched the pounds accumulate, slowly, as she moved from her teenage years into adulthood.

*"I knew I needed to lose weight," says Ross, now in her early 40s. "So I started running in 1995."*

When she did, she made herself the exception to the rule. Fewer than half of Americans get the recommended amount of exercise. Lots of people believe they're too busy to be physically active or see it as an inconvenience. Meanwhile, a simple workout routine might actually save them time. It can boost energy levels, reduce feelings of stress and promote better sleep. It may even improve memory and ability to think.

And that's not taking into account some serious "inconveniences" that physical activity can help to prevent: diabetes, high blood pressure and other chronic diseases.

Ross wasn't logging speedy mileage overnight. "I could only run for two or three minutes at a time. Then I would walk for one or two minutes," she says. "I gradually built myself up to running a 10K," about 6.2 miles. Ross lost 30 pounds over time and found she had more energy at work. Usually an anxious person, she also noticed that running relieved her stress.

There's no need to become a dedicated runner like Ross. Even short intervals of moderate activity—things like brisk walking, housework or gardening done for at least 10 minutes at a time—can improve your health if they add up to 150 minutes (two and a half hours) a week.



### SOURCES:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. Accessed: 01/19/2012
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Adult Physical Activity Statistics. Accessed: 12/15/2011

# 5 Common Myths About Exercise

**Don't believe everything you hear when it comes to exercise. Dispel the myths before working out, and you'll be more likely to stick to your routine.**

While some fitness myths, such as “no pain, no gain,” are fading fast, many myths about exercise still exist. Here are some common ones - and the truth about them.

**1 Exercise is a waste of time** unless you work out hard and often. This kind of thinking keeps a lot of people from sticking to an exercise program. Thirty minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, five times a week is all you need to maintain your weight and reduce your risk of heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. To lose weight, cut calories from your diet or exercise more. Walking, bicycling, and swimming are all good ways to exercise at a modest pace.

**2 Yoga is a completely gentle and safe workout.** Some forms of yoga are physically and mentally difficult. While injuries are rare, staying in certain positions can cause nerve damage or back pain. Avoiding certain postures and changing others can make yoga safer for most healthy people - even pregnant women. As with any exercise, proper instruction is needed for a safe workout. If you have a health condition or are pregnant, talk with your doctor before trying yoga.

**3 You can lose all the weight you want just by exercising.** Increasing physical activity is just one part of a successful weight-loss plan. You need to cut calories, too. How many pounds you lose may also depend on your genes. What works for one person may not work for another. Still, exercise is an important part of any weight-loss program, and it offers many other health benefits.

**4 You can “spot reduce” certain areas of your body.** Truth be told, you can do a ton of crunches and sit-ups and never get chiseled abs. It's not possible to burn off fat from one area of your body. Regular aerobic exercise, strength training, and a healthy diet is the best way to get rid of extra body fat.



**5 If you want to lose weight, don't strength-train.** It will make you “bulk up.” Experts advise both aerobic and strength-training exercises to maintain a healthy weight. The more muscle you have, the more calories you burn - even when you're not working out. This makes it easier to keep off the pounds. Also, try adding crunches, push-ups, lunges, and other exercises to your regular routine to build muscle. A fitness professional can help you create a strength-training routine that works for you. Only very intense strength training exercises combined with certain genetic factors leads to large muscles.

Remember, always talk to your doctor before you start any exercise program.

#### SOURCES:

- American Council on Exercise. ACE lists most common fitness myths. Accessed: 07/14/2010
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. How much physical activity do adults need? Accessed: 07/14/2010
- National Institutes of Health. Weight-loss and nutrition myths. How much do you really know? Accessed: 07/14/2010

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